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CHAPTER FOUR

Thoughts on *Svara* and *Rasa*: Music as Thinking/ Thinking as Music

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It might seem odd, if not perversely counterintuitive, even to think of relating—let alone equating music to thought, for this assumes a close kinship that seems to be entirely absent. Music, indeed, helps us to move away from thought. The realms of music and thought pursue ends that take our consciousness in entirely different directions. Music may be said to be a kind of *bhoga*, engulfing us in an immersion akin to self-forgetfulness; and this is plainly quite opposed to the quiet, deliberate, transparent, self-transcending, and reflexive self-awareness that belongs to thought. Music, for this reason, can be readily and meaningfully associated with food and festivity, marriage, love-making, even death; it can go with states of feeling, even, in its sublimity, with a reflective or meditative *mood*, but not with discursive thought that seeks a self-reflexive withdrawal from other activities, especially those leading to self-forgetfulness. Music, because of its relation with the feeling consciousness, can also be associated with the other arts: an association that can take place at a deeper and more integral level than its relation with the kind of celebratory activities named above. Such a deeper, more integral relation is evident in theater. But any meaningfully significant association of music with reflective thought seems, quite apparently, to be unthinkable.

What, then, does it mean to equate music to thought as I am trying to do here?

A little reflection, however, will show that a kinship is not difficult to find. We can discover one if we consider music as an autonomous, exclusive activity, an activity meaningful on its own. We can then perceive that music like thought is a similarly profound and reflexive activity. Even a little searching attention reveals that music is similar to thought in its abstraction; it seeks a similar withdrawal, and shares a similar reflexive consciousness that can be seen as parallel to thought. This is most evident in contemplating a rāga: in singing it, playing it, or even in listening to it.

But, paradoxically, it is here that we also realize how different it is from thought. We find ourselves in a world of feeling that has withdrawn into itself and has certainly no place for discursive thought. And yet at the same time it now becomes manifest that the two, music and thought, partake of a reflexive spirit and processes of inner,

abstract movement that are deeply analogous, thus disclosing an unexpected yet extraordinary kinship. A reflection on this kinship can help us to understand both music and thought with a new insight. To use a metaphor, we can now see the one as a kind of mirror for the other, where the one reflects the other, and a sensitive realization of this can, I think, afford us a keener look into the two and perceive their deep-seated kinship.

Clearly, both music and thought are realms embodied in symbols, or rather, systems of symbols. These may be seen as different "languages" that are rich and powerful mediums for the reflexive consciousness. The word, "language," is indeed often used to denote both of them; but it is needless to remark here that this is a lākṣaṇika or figurative use of the word, since these two "languages" that embody thought and music are of very different kinds as systematic worlds of symbols. This can be readily seen in the fact that they are not translatable into each other. In fact the nontranslatability of music is even more basic: something said in a linguistic sentence can, in principle, be said in a different set of words, even in the same language. This is not possible in music. The very category of "translation" appears meaningless here. But translatability, on the contrary, can be seen as a basic criterion of meaningfulness in what we know as language—word-based language—as Kautsa penetratingly remarked in speaking of the Vedas. Yāska (seventh-century BCE) quotes him as observing that the Veda cannot be considered as meaningful since the syllabic order that constitutes a Vedic mantra is considered inalterable. But if this is so, Kautsa argued, a Vedic mantra cannot be taken as an utterance in a language, since whatever is said in a language can always be said with a different syllabic order, that is, with different words, and this is true in principle, for if an alternative formulation is not possible, we are not in the realm of language; the Veda therefore, lacks meaning.

But the "language" of music, unlike word-based language in which the Vedic mantras are articulated, is both meaningful and untranslatable. If the mantras, for example, were tablā- bols, embodied in language-like syllables, but not aimed at articulating words, we could meaningfully say that a change in the syllabic order will change the *meaning* of the bol. Now the *meaning* of tablā-bols, unless we restrict the use of the concept of meaning to word-based languages, is certainly of a very different kind, and, obviously, quite distinct from that of a word-using language.

The difference in the very nature of meaning being intimated here may be conceptually understood in terms of the notions of abhidhā and vyañjanā. They point at two different realms of meaning, and we can see the difference between the two realms in considering ordinary word-using language with some depth, for it has both abhidhā and vyañjanā. Abhidhā is denotative, indicative meaning, and vyañjanā may be characterized as "evocative." There are languages that have no abhidhā, only vyañjanā. The system of tablā-bols—or music as such—is one such language. Although ordinary language has both abhidhā and vyañjanā, we usually think of it in terms of abhidhā, a denotative process without which our vyavahāra or ordinary living is unthinkable—and so is thinking, since concepts, like things, are also denoted through words. It is abhidhā that has the kind of translatability that Kautsa had in mind. But vyañjanā with its evocative, nondenotative and nontranslatable meaning is as rooted in language as abhidhā. It is vyañjanā that makes not only

tablā-bols but poetry possible. And it is because of vyañjanā that poetry is considered untranslatable. The poetic meaning of an utterance is clearly lost with a change in its syllabic order: that is, if a poem is translated into other words, even in the same language. For what we then have is a meaning sans the vyañjanā: the "evocative" sense that makes poetry *mean* what it does.

Ānandavardhana has argued that the significance of vyañjanā lies in a meaning that is addressed not to our intellect but to our emotive, *felt* consciousness. Vyañjanā, he felt and argued, is as inherent and natural a function—or power—of language as abhidhā, and like abhidhā it too works in many ways. Typically, language in vyañjanā can move out of the rationale or denotative logic of abhidhā and deliberately distort it for its own purposes. An obvious way to look for vyañjanā in ordinary language is the path taken by the old *ālaṅkārikas*. It is easy as they pointed out to discover that vyañjanā is an inherent part not only of poetry, but of ordinary, normal everyday—vyāvahārika—usage where we find that we deliberately distort evident logical sense in order to convey a meaning that such a sense does not, indeed cannot, envision. It is because of the fact that vyañjanā is immanent in language that poetry is possible. Take the famous example of the Sanskrit phrase, *gaṅgāyāṃ ghoṣaḥ*, which may be translated for our purpose as, "the village is right *in* the Gangā." This may sound a little awkward in English and so may not quite work, but take the sentence, "she is lost in the TV." These are obviously very ordinary usages, language is unthinkable without them. One can indeed think of innumerable examples, even coin them; in fact, one keeps coining them continuously (because once usage becomes conventional, it loses its bite: its evocative vyañjanā). Clearly, such usage is an integral part of language. The sense, the significant point, behind such usages is to lead meaning into the arena of the felt consciousness. We can see that the intention behind speaking of a village as being "in" the river Gangā is to evoke a felt sense in the listener: a feeling of purity and coolness regarding the village, a feeling that cannot be denoted—cannot be reduced to abhidhā . Similarly, in saying "she is lost in the TV," a sense of utter attentiveness is *evoked*, rather than denoted. Such usages purposely—and with their own rationale, meaningfully—distort ordinary logic. And we are aware of this: we *know* that such "distortion" is aimed at a "felt" understanding and is imbued with a "meaning" of its own that is both untranslatable and calls for a distortion of ordinary sense—that is of abhidhā. We also know that mere distortion is not enough: the distortion has to be "meaningful" its own way, calling for an understanding and logic of its own kind. True, what is said through vyañjanā may be, usually, "rendered" or "translated" into abhidhā: one could say, "being on the Gangā, the village is very cool and pure"; or "she is totally occupied in watching the TV," and the like. But to reduce vyañjanā to abhidhā will also mean a loss of the *felt* sense, the *evoked* meaning, which is not only untranslatable but is the intention—and the reason—behind such usages. It is this aspect of language that makes it inherently poetical. Poetry, we grant, is not really translatable. This is because vyañjanā is not translatable in principle, not even into another vyañjanā . This is not to negate poetic translations, but the word "translation" is here used loosely: since, such a "translation" if it is also a successful poem is, in fact, a new poem with a new vyañjanā, even if it is judged as sharing the "intent" of the original.

What we have said above should not be taken to mean that distorting abhidhā is necessary for vyañjanā : there are great poems where the language is straightforward abhidhā. But even in a poem that is seemingly forthright abhidhā, it is the vyañjanā that is the heart of the poem, and it remains untranslatable: changing the words of the poem will make it anonpoem or new poem. What we wish to point out through the discussion here is that abhidhā and vyañjanā lead to different realms of meaning. Vyañjanā is the medium for a realm of meaning that, being connected with our felt consciousness, has a basis and justification—a pramāṇa, one could say—of its own.

That the category of translation is not really meaningful in vyañjanā is more manifestly evident when we note that there are "languages" that have only vyañjanā and no abhidhā. Music is one such rich and powerful language. It would not make sense to say of a svara- yojanā (a musical phrase or a coherent group of musical phrases) that it can be *translated* into another svara-yojanā, much less into word-based language. Here we can really say to Kautsa that a change of svara-order will change the meaning, for there will, clearly, be a change of vyañjanā . The new svara-order, if "meaningful" will make a new musical sense. Music as a "language" thus cannot be equated with word-based language, though, like such language, it too is formulated through a rich system of symbols. Also, like language, it is multiple by nature, and gives voice to very different traditions and cultures, embodying deep-rooted civilizational distinctions, as can be seen in the profound, overwhelming difference between the polyphonous European and monodic Indian music.

Music can also be seen to have a natural proclivity for reflexivity: for svara, the foundational unit of music, is a naturally abstract symbol. Consider in this context the very nature of svara. Words—despite the different meaning-worlds they create in the different realms of knowledge, feeling, and action—are characterized by a vācya-vācakā-bhAva, a separable word-meaning relation, a relation that makes translation possible, because the same vācya can have different vācakas. But svaras simply do not have a vācya. A svara is meaningful—that is, it has a vyañjanā—by itself. It may be called a self-sustained, *svayampratiṣṭha* symbol. It does not have a sound-meaning duality like language: svara as sound does not look for a meaning outside itself.[1] But its svayampratiṣṭha nature also implies that svara is inherently abstract in character. It thus can be used as a basis for a powerful language of pure vyañjanā : its abstract character also enabling it to be a medium for its own distinct kind of reflexivity. There are many such languages—painting, theater and dance among others. But the language of svara may perhaps be said to form the richest and most self-contained—or *svayampratiṣṭha* of them, and thus an apt medium for pure, "self-contained," reflexivity. As a language it allows us, paradoxically it might seem, to inhabit the world of feeling and yet remain a witness to it. Through svara we can reflect on a world of pure feeling while remaining in the feeling consciousness, withdrawn from the context of the ordinary world of human living or vyavahāra. Svara, in other words, permits us to self-reflexively explore the felt world as a world of meaning, to investigate its independent vastness and its immense possibilities with an introspective, imaginative and creative eye. It richly reveals to us that like the thinking consciousness, the felt-consciousness is also a reflexive consciousness.

But this being so, it can also meaningfully form a mirror for the self-understanding of thought, and the other way around.

For the purpose of our discussion, another significant aspect of the svapratiṣṭa nature of svara is worthy of reflection here. The fact that svara lacks a vācya-vācaka-bhāva has another profound implication: the lack of a vācya-vācaka-bhāva also implies the lack of a subject–object relation—a viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāva. What we have in its place is a subject–subject relation that vyañjanā can be seen to be rooted in: a vyañjita—evoked—meaning works within the subject-consciousness, it is conveyed to the subject, for the subject. The svayampratiṣṭha nature of svara where there is only vyañjanā and no abhidhā makes this fact even more apparent. The vyañjita meaning evoked by a word-based language is never felt to be pure undiluted vyañjanā because of its association with abhidhā, and the vācya-vācaka-bhāva inherent in abhidhā. A viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāva is never entirely felt to be absent in ordinary language. It is retained as background for vyañjanā, if not as sustaining support. One could even assert that word-based languages are basically founded on abhidhā, and vyañjanā is parasitic on it.

Thought too is intrinsically founded in a viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāva. Even as a discursive-reflexive activity embedded in the subject, it cannot but conceive of the subject except as an object. Using words as its medium, thought can be seen to be essentially, and quite self-consciously, a wilfully abhidhā-based activity. In fact, the more abstract the thought, the more self- reflexively it withdraws into a pure vyañjanā-less abhidhā; one can indeed see it as moving wilfully toward an avoidance of vyañjanā to seek greater discursive self-transparency. The svayampratiṣṭha abstraction of svara, on the other hand, being entirely untouched by a vācya-vācaka-bhāva is also removed from a viṣaya-viṣayi-bhāva. What the language of svara makes possible thus is a reflective consciousness where the felt subject becomes capable of contemplating itself while remaining in the subjective mode. It is enabled to become its own witness: to contemplate itself without becoming an object. A language-sustained, hence meaning-sustained, subject–subject relation is true of all vyañjanā, but is more clearly manifest in svara. Needless to add that in such a reflexive state of self-contemplation, the subject is not an individual but a universal subject, as it is in thought. Pure vyañjanā, sans a subject–object-oriented vācya-vācaka-bhāva, makes this possible.

The matter, I think, can become clearer, if we reflect on the concept of sādharaṇākaraṇa as understood by Abhinavagupta in the context of *rasa*. In the experience of *rasa*, Abhinava says, emotions or feelings become universalized (i.e., become sādhāraṇīkṛta), a process that takes place through vyañjanā. A sādhāraṇīkṛta or universalized emotion is an emotion that is freed from its ordinary everyday state where it has an obsessive and overwhelming hold on us as individuals. In the *rasa* experience this hold is loosened and the emotion is transmuted into an individual-transcending universal. In ordinary life we remain in the clutches of our emotions: we are driven and carried by them; they master us, control us, keep us occupied in such a way that there is no space in our awareness where they can shine on their own and reveal their true transcendent nature. Sādharaṇākaraṇa makes this possible. A sādhāraṇīkṛta emotion is emotion freed from the confining

tie that narrows it to an individual. Freeing our feeling-consciousness from the overwhelming, binding nature of our everyday limited individual emotional self, it enables us to relish our emotional-being in its true universal, hence transcendent, nature. This is *Rasa*. It not only enables us to relish our emotions, but also gives us a foretaste, a living insight, into the ānanda, which is inherent in the very nature of our self and consciousness. It is not difficult to see here that a sādhāraṇīkṛta emotion being a universal is also a reflexively felt emotion: we experience it in a state of felt self-consciousness where we are a witness to it as we feel it—or one might say—we "know" it as we feel it. But this "knowing"—if such a word is to be meaningful here—is not a "knowing" where the feeling becomes an object of knowledge, for then there will be no *rasa*. We "know" it from within our subjective self, in what I have termed a subject–subject relation.

Abhinava has spoken of *rasa*, and the sādharaṇākaraṇa that leads to it, in thinking about theater which, through Bharata, has been at the center of Indian thinking concerning *rasa*. A theatrical presentation can be readily seen, as Abhinava did, as an imaginative transformation and *re*-presentation—or rather re-creation of the human condition—the lived life and world of human experience—on the stage. The theatrical stage creates a space for us where we can become a detached witness to our own living, experiencing human self—and thus reflect on it—while yet remaining in a felt, experiencing consciousness. This is possible because of the unique and peculiarly "real-unreal" nature of theater and the *extra*ordinary world that it creates—a world that we know to be imaginative and yet a world with which we deeply identify. The nature of this unique world cannot be comprehended, as Abhinava asserts, by the ordinary ontic categories of our understanding: categories such as real, unreal, illusive, doubtful, possible, impossible, or the like. None of these apply to the world of theater which, though a re-presentation of the human world, is yet a distinctive creation that projects a world of its own, independent of the world we live in. It is a deliberate creation that by intention and design accosts our felt experiencing self. Being a world with which we identify, it has the quality of being lived and experienced, and yet being an imaginary world of our own creation, it allows us to be an onlooker and enables our felt consciousness to withdraw from itself, and yet "feelingly know" itself with a reflexive self-awareness. We can readily realize the reflexive nature of this felt awareness when we perceive that in this state even an overpowering, consuming emotion such as fear is transmuted into something that can now be relished. This is because, as Abhinava argues, the fear that I experience in watching a drama is not *my* fear. Indeed, it is nobody's fear: it does not "belong" to anyone at all; the category of "belonging to someone" is taken away from it. Clearly, it does not "belong" to the actor who is presenting it on the stage (if it did there would be no such presentation), nor does it belong to the playwright or the producer of the play or any of the many onlookers of the presentation. What we have, in Abhinavagupta's words, is a sādhāraṇīkṛta—or universalized—emotion free of its individual limitations. Indeed, the imaginatively created world of theater can be seen as a "language," of its own kind, a language that uses the happenings and doings of our lived-felt world and weaves them into a system of symbols to create a language of vyañjanā that gives rise to *rasa*, an individual-transcending state of the

feeling-consciousness, a reflexive state, where our emotional self acquires an eye to see itself, and where emotion, thus transformed, is elevated into a state of relish.

However, the word sādharaṇākaraṇa here raises questions. Clearly, universalization or sādharaṇākaraṇa is not limited to the process of *rasa*, and so to vyañjanā . Even abhidhā cannot work without it. Let us take the word "fear" as ordinarily used (as abhidhā). Fear is plainly a universal concept, like all words it is sādhāraṇīkṛta—as Abhinava himself would have admitted: there is no fear in thought or conceived "fear." But, then the moot question is—a question Abhinava does not raise: How is the sādharaṇākaraṇa of vyañjanā that gives rise to *rasa*, different from that of abhidhā ? The question is obvious though it was not raised by either Abhinava or the thinkers following him. It has been recently raised by Yashdev Shalya, a perceptive modern thinker and philosopher. The question, I think, is important; it can lead us to a more fruitful grasp of the sādharaṇākaraṇa that Abhinava had in mind in the context of *rasa* and the vyañjanā that gives rise to it. It will also steer us toward a fuller understanding of the process of vyañjanā in music that cannot be understood in the light of theater, since music, unlike theater, is svapratiṣṭha and nonrepresentational.

Shalya has another objection to Abhinava, an objection that concerns theater as a representational—loka-pratiṣṭha—art. Shalya questions Abhinava's idea of a "non-belonging" emotion. To say, Shalya points out, that fear in a dramatic (or narrative) context does not belong to anyone (and thus is rendered sādhāraṇīkṛta) is not true, for fear in such a context has to be someone's fear: it has to belong to some character or characters in the play to be perceived as fear at all.

Shalya's objections are, I think, pertinent for us in trying to understand the distinctive character of music and the nature of vyañjanā in it. To the argument that the emotion in a play must belong to someone, one might answer—Abhinava himself, one can imagine, might have so answered—that an emotion, such as fear, occurring in a theatrical or narrative context, cannot be said to really *occur*, for the simple reason that what happens in the theater is not judged as real: there is no adhyavasāya here of "something truly happening." Interestingly, Abhinava does speak of an adhyavasāya here, a special, distinctive adhyavasāya that we have in watching a play. The events that take place are, in their own way, judged as "occurring"; otherwise they will have no effect on us. But they are judged as occurring in the peculiar context of theater, which we know to be imaginary, where our felt self willingly identifies itself with characters and events and "has" their experiences, while, at the same time, remaining aware that nothing is *really* taking place. It is this peculiar character of a dramatic happening and our felt perception of it that transmutes our normal—or laukika—emotive experience into a new and transcendent state, a state of abstraction that might be cognized as the self-reflexivity of our felt consciousness.

The term, sādharaṇākaraṇa, we can then presume, was understood by Abhinava—and other ālaṅkārikas following him—in a special sense in the special context of *rasa*, a context that assumes the process of vyañjanā as distinct from abhidhā. Abhinava, and others following him, seem to assume this distinction without overtly speaking of it. Abhinava was, needless to add, deeply aware of the difference between abhidhā and vyañjanā . The use of the word "fear" as *denoting* an emotion, as he himself

points out (the word he uses is "śṛṅgāra" or "love") has no vyañjanā: it does not, in the least, *evoke* fear, but only names it, whereas the language of dramatic narrative with its vyañjanā can transform "fear" into the bhayānaka (fear-oriented) *rasa*, which is a totally different experience.

It is usually forgotten in discussions on *rasa* that the state resulting through sādharaṇākaraṇa, evoked through vyañjanā has to be understood as a meaning-perceiving state, though unlike abhidhā the perceived meaning is a felt meaning, without becoming an abhidhā-based concept and hence an object. The older theorists unduly emphasize the relish aspect of the sādhāraṇīkṛta emotion, saying that what sādharaṇākaraṇa does is to remove an obstacle: it takes our emotive life out of its normal obsessive confines and enables us to feel and relish the Ānanda that is its truth. But we cannot really understand the notion of sādharaṇākaraṇa, whether it arises through abhidhā or through vyañjanā, unless we grasp the sādhāraṇīkṛta as something having a meaning. That vyañjanā is a process of meaning is indeed evident, as we have remarked, from the fact that it is embodied in a language-like system of symbols. A sādhāraṇīkṛta universal, whether evoked through vyañjanā or denoted through abhidhā, is grasped as meaning or else it cannot be said to be grasped at all. The relish aspect of *rasa* has been vastly overdone by the *rasa*-theorists. Fear, even as a universalized emotion is not really relished. There is no relish in the fear evoked by great narratives of the human condition. What is evoked often amounts to a kind of terror, much worse than ordinary fear. The *Mahābhārata*, many would agree, evokes nirveda (world-weariness). This has been associated with the quietude of śānta *rasa*, but nirveda can also be clearly seen as lying on the same path as terror.

But if we make the language of a dramatic narrative fundamental to vyañjanā, as the older theorists seem to do, we cannot talk of it meaningfully in music. *Svara* is not only devoid of any kind of vācya-vācaka-bhāva, it is, in fact, totally non-representational, unlike, for example, lines and colors in painting, which *can* represent the world. There can be no theater without a representation of the world we live in, but the abstract world of music, on the contrary, is completely free not only of the world of sense-perceived objects, but even the category of the "object" is missing from it. In the case of word-based language, it might be argued that language does not really *re*-present a world outside of it, but it actually *presents* such a world to us—a world that is nāma-rūpa, where rūpa cannot be detached from nāma—and so our world is in a radical sense a language-*created* world, and thus essentially "abstract": for it has no existence outside of thought. But thought, we have seen, is embedded in a subject-object relation—the world for it is an object, even if it does not exist outside of it; but svara, we have also seen, lacks such a relation. The abstract nature of thought, however understood, takes place in a language that assumes a subject–object relation. But not *svara*.

What is moot for us here is the point that the abstract nature of thought and its reflexive character that assumes this abstract nature is generally granted and reflected upon. In fact, it is further assumed that only thought can be self-reflexive, and as a corollary to this it is taken for granted that reflexivity needs a words-based language with its subject–object relation to be possible at all: indeed, such a relation of duality, it might be added, is necessary for the self-detachment that reflexivity calls for. For

this reason we do not normally pay attention to the profoundly reflexive—or what may be called the "thinking"—aspect of music. What we have attempted above at some length is just to do this: to help us discursively comprehend music as a language in which abstraction is inbuilt, an abstraction that is founded on a self-detachment within the felt subject itself.

But arguments apart, it is not really difficult to realize the reflexive character of music more immediately. One has only to look at ālāpa. Ālāpa is the imaginative process with which a rāga is built up in direct performance, where we can *see* the rāga taking shape through an imaginative process that is plainly akin to thinking. Thinking aims at building up a conceptual structure into a *thought*, by combining, rejecting, relating concepts in order to understand and articulate a larger abstract idea or notion, such as that, for example, of "truth" or "justice," or the "world" or the "self," or "thought" itself. A rāga is similarly an abstract musical idea or notion that has to be articulated through the thought-like process of ālāpa, which imaginatively builds up a rāga, as one does a concept, by reflectively, appropriately and meaningfully combining, separating, rejecting svara-clusters, movements, phrasings, tempi, and the like with reflective discrimination. Thinking of ālāpa in this context comes readily to someone like me who belongs to the musical milieu of rāga-making, but we can easily move from here and see that the imaginative process of ālāpa is central to music-making as such. In non-rāga milieus what we usually accost are finished products of the musical imagination, or what may be termed "dhuns." We take them as given. As musicians we learn to reproduce them, and as listeners we respond to them as set compositions. We might assess them, analyze them, describe them, theorize about them, contemplatively reflect on them, or in other words, *think* about them in various ways. But the self-aware and self-discriminating reflexive process that is immanent in them does not come across to us directly as in ālāpa. But though it remains hidden, it is always there. This, as we know, is similar with thought. Consider here the difference between thinking and thought. A thought, like a finished dhun, is given to us as a finished product, and we usually take it such, without realizing that it is embedded in a living, dynamic ongoing *process*. Yet this is not difficult to realize, since questioning is essential even to a passive understanding of a given thought, and questioning stimulates a deeper jijñāsā and impels us to *think*. It is the same with music: our attention is normally occupied by a finished composition: a dhun. But in ālāpa the *process* that creates a work becomes vibrantly manifest and comes to the center of our awareness, revealing itself to be at the core of the activity and life of music—so much so that the rāga as a finished product, the end-result of a particular ālāpa—however satisfying and definitive and final-seeming it might be, yet remains basically an open formulation, the possibility of other, different, formulations remain inherent in the nature of the process that results in a unique, singular, articulation: a rāga remains an ongoing thing quite transparently, never becoming a dhun. We usually miss the ālāpa in thought, which is mostly presented to us as dhun: in text-books, books on the history of thought or in class-room lectures. But it is not difficult to grasp the living movement of thinking as an imaginatively dynamic process that underlies a finished product of thinking—a thought-dhun—for, as we have said, even a finished thought potentially invites us to

think, for it is rooted in a process that can take ever newer imaginative directions. Such a plurality of imaginative possibilities, which is naturally engendered by the rule and reign of *process* is openly evident in rāga-ālāpa, even at the surface. Indeed, the aim of the enterprise of ālāpa is to make the process dominant; and this also means that a rāga has no definitive, singular finality. It cannot be a final and *finished* product. It is the process that creates it, and we realize at every step that it can do so in multiple ways. Indeed, the process being at the center of the matter, the finished products too are revealed as fluent, malleable things: a rāga even as a normative musical idea cannot in its nature be a "given" with any finality. A rāga, in fact, is ever pregnant not only with new possibilities but also with new rāgas, which, in principle, remain multiple. And the process is not just a matter of the old constantly giving birth to the new as a kind of natural process, but entirely new articulations, new ways of imagining the form and spirit of the very notion of rāga also emerge. Let me take two examples: one from Carnatic music and the other from Hindustani. One often thinks of certain basic musical structures and relations between svaras, such as scales, as given in the very nature—or, one might say, the "deep" grammar—of music. But for the creativity of the process there is no such limitation; it seeks new meanings, ever seeking to expand its horizons. In the development of the rāga tradition, the number of svaras, the "absolute," non-violable, "given" relations between them, the number and nature of the scales, and other structural imperatives, were taken as fixed. But the open and imaginative process of ālāpa being essential to the making of a rāga, this could not remain so. The number of svaras and the resultant scales kept on increasing; given, inviolable harmonies were ignored and creatively violated (like the rule of contradiction in thought, resulting in concepts such as, "sadasadvilakṣaṇa," or even, as we have seen, "nāṭya") and new musically unwarranted, "illogical," pitch-intervals became svaras and new svara combinations were found musically meaningful. Venkatmakhin (sixteenth century), a musician and musical theorists from the South, imparted to this perceived possibility a new leap. He thought of new possible scales, some on norms quite alien to the hallowed, established patterns. These became the basis of new rāgas. Ahobala (seventeenth century) from the North was even more radical. Influenced by the practice and thinking of the great musicians of his days, he propounded the revolutionary view that it is not svaras that make rāgas, but rāgas that make svaras: any pitch- interval that is meaningful in a rāga and helps to give form to its spirit, its bhāva, and enriches it creatively is a svara; hence there is no pitch-interval that is not potentially a svara. This is indeed true of modern rāga practice, where the scale is not only a continuum, but a continuum that is wrought in multiple ways to individualize the svara-structure and the movement between svaras of different rāgas.

The two theorists, one might think, take entirely different paths: the one is bent on multiplying rāgas, the other on individualizing a rāga. But the two processes are complementary: they are two aspects of the openness and the immense innate potentialities of the arena of ālāpa. Let us reflect a little more on Ahobala, applying his principle to the field of thought. An idea, we could say, following him, is not formulated through pregiven words, but rather, on the contrary, the idea "chooses" the words that would articulate it, and it might coin new words to do so to

appropriately express its "spirit." Ahobala's position that svaras are not pregiven entities is, in fact, more obviously true of words or concepts: there is no pregiven finished and complete totality or predefined and demarcated arena of words in language. Language is an immanently ongoing process, incessantly instituted in ālāpa. In articulating an idea—or a rāga—ālāpa can be seen to be not only a self-consciously reflexive process, but a process that reaches out beyond itself. We discover ourselves as constantly looking for the right svara, or the right word. The significant—and seemingly paradoxical—thing here is that the criterion for what is fitting is also the rāga or idea itself; but a rāga—or an idea—is not like a prelaid-out blue-print to which we can readily refer. In fact, the rāga or the idea, do not "exist" in the normal sense at all, not even in a metaphysical world that we could perceive with a yogic eye. The "being" of a rāga, or an idea, however one might understand it, is accessible only to the reflexive consciousness, which reaches out to it: it both envisions it and seeks to express it, acting at the same time as the judge of the "right," the appropriate—a judge, who, regrettably, can also easily falter, go wrong, and be deluded. But such *is* the creative process: which is inexorably a pratyaṅgmukha—endlessly inward-turning—reflexive process. Nāgārjuna, on just such a ground, would have dismissed the process as niḥsvabhāva—"empty," having no being at all. A pramāṇa (a ground for truth or validity), as he has argued, is inevitably a part of the reflexive process where it becomes a prameya (the object being examined through a pramāṇa), and this process can keep turning on itself and reflecting on itself without end—ad infinitum—reaching nowhere; and hence the idea of pramāṇa is niḥsvabhāva—empty, and therefore absurd and meaningless. But this is how creativity works: it can be seen to be deeply embedded in the incessantly inward-moving self-contemplating consciousness. The inward-turning—pratyaṅgmukha—and endless process of reflexivity is a deeply imaginative process. It is not merely unendingly self-repetitive, as the anavasthā that Nāgārjuna accords to it seems to imply, but it is in fact a meaning-searching process that can enrich itself at each new inward turn; being meaning-seeking it is also a pramāṇa-seeking process that is constantly reaching beyond itself for not only its enrichment but its validation. It can be seen as a process of an increasing and expanding spiral of awareness: of "seeing." It reaches out, stretches out, keeps transcending itself seeking meaning and its right expression and embodiment. This is what underlies ālāpa, and ālāpa is not limited to svara or even to word, it is rooted in the meaning-consciousness itself.

The notions of paśyatī and parā vāk may help to elucidate what I am trying to say here. The idea of paśyatī vāk (and the word "vāk" here, can be plainly taken to indicate both music and word-based language: both being sound-based) suggests a level of meaning-consciousness that lies beyond the ordinary levels of language usage, beyond, in other words, of vaikharī (uttered, expressed language) and madhyamā (the unuttered flow of language that keeps endlessly moving in our consciousness). We are in the field of paśyatī when we are *seeking* to articulate an unexpressed thought—or a rāga. We look for the right word or svara, which is not there but which we reach through our meaning-seeking reflexive consciousness. But what is the criterion of discrimination? The criterion is the unexpressed, disembodied idea itself, for there can be no other. And this search therefore leads us beyond paśyatī

into parā: for the sought idea—or rāga—is not a singularly existing "metaphysical" entity, it lies in an ineffable field of an ever creative possibility. This is the parā, the source, the seed or the nucleus of meaningfulness. We have no grasp of it, except, in whatever measure, through our inward-turning reflexive consciousness, which forever and insistently tries to reach out to it.

If we have followed the discussion above with some sympathy, it should not be difficult to see a kinship in the ālāpa of svara and thought. But the two, one might still assert, seek very different ends. Svara is essentially a seeker of anekānta—of plurality—whereas thought seeks the singular, the ekāntic truth. It may not reach it, may never reach it, but that is its immanent goal. *Rasa*, that svara seeks, unlike satya that cannot but be "one," is, on the other hand, inherently "many." Even if we grant an ālāpa-like imagination and fluidity to thinking, this cannot negate the fact that what the ālāpa seeks *here* is finality: the truth as it is; and this cannot but be ekānta. It makes no sense to think of truth as anekānta. However, let us suppose that the truth has been finally reached in some all-seeing thought which, then, naturally, claims finality. Such claims are indeed many: plural in themselves. But will any finality, however authoritative, persuasive, and compelling, stop further thinking and the questioning, which is immanent to thought? Will we not ask: Is this really the truth? Attempts have been made, and certainly will be made again and again to stop such questioning. But such attempts clearly lie outside the ālāpa that is the heart of thinking—they use means other than thinking to impose nonthinking.

But even if we grant this, a still deeper and more crucial case can be made here for ekānta in thought. It can be argued—and indeed easily perceived—that thought—or rather, "thinking"—by its very nature seeks finality; it might be seen, in truth, to seek an all-covering omniscient finality, since thought pervades all our seeing and seeking: our is and our ought. To aim at finality is inherent in it, and at its broadest it seeks an all-pervasive finality. It may not arrive at it—and perhaps it is by nature not capable of arriving at it—as some thinkers will insist—yet the entire discourse on truth, even in negating truth, can be seen to assume the finality of the singular, nondual—advaya—truth. With svara however the matter is just the opposite, because of the inherently anekānta nature of *rasa*. Yet consider this: a seeking of finality is not really absent from whatever we do and create. We seek in our enterprises to construct a whole: an internally harmonized, consistent, coherent "singular" totality. The immanent ambition of thought is to do this with the broadest possible vision. Svara does not have the pervasiveness of thought—thought can reflect on svara, but svara cannot do this with thought—but even svara seeks such finality: a meaningful projection of a rāga aims at projecting the "complete" rāga as a *singular* whole. But *rasa* being multiple by nature, such finality remains forever, and knowingly, nonfinal. This is not so with thought. But we might yet ask: is the finality of thought not really similar? And further: is truth really something singular? If we make mathematics a mirror for thought, as has often been done in the west, singularity—indeed a "final" deductive singularity, becomes the ideal for thought. A similar thing happens if the finality of the "one" spiritual experience is considered as singular, as in India. The ideal of sense-perception as the final pramāṇa for satya, also leads to an analogous notion of the singularity of truth. But mathematics, as has been

shone, is also an imaginative enterprise pregnant with plurality, however deductive it might seem. And the nonfinality of sense-perception has been questioned right from the beginning of thought: the very enterprise of thought begins with the percept that what we see is appearance and not reality. Thus it is not unthinkable for thought to see itself in the mirror of svara, and thereby realize its plurality, a plurality akin to that of svara. True, the category of "truth" is inapplicable to svara, whereas thought is unthinkable without it. Yet what do we seek through svara? Do we not seek a profound authenticity, an ever-rising depth, breadth, and height of imaginative insight and vision? But is this not what thinking is also about! Thinking, in fact, does this in a more self-aware manner. It is ever self-conscious of its reflexivity. Music, if it looks at itself in the mirror of thought, can perhaps aim at being more self-consciously thought-like.

NOTE

1. Music for the ancients, as with us today, was mainly a vocal enterprise. But the nonrepresentational or abstract nature of music was recognized even during Vedic times, especially within the circles of Sāma-singers. Indeed, Sāma is the only example of a revelation that is purely in svaras, with its own composer ṛṣis, independent of the sung words of the Ṛk. In the literature of the Sāma circles, especially *the Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* (tenth–ninth-century BCE), the purely musical aspect of Sāma is clearly revealed in the notions of the anṛk (Ṛik-less) and aśarīrī (content-less) Sāma and the stories connected with these. The text speaks also of the worship of Sāma as an icon consisting purely of svaras.Later a sacred form of sophisticated high-art music called the Gāndharva and considered to be born of Sāma, became a center of practice and discourse with its own śāstras, dealing with matters theoretical, descriptive, and aesthetic. Gāndharva, a basically a sung form like Sāma, was more clearly nonrepresentational and abstract. Its complex and intricate music was sung to meaningless syllables interspersed with some words that did not disturb its abstract intent. It was, as one can readily perceive, as autonomous and abstract as Dhrupad and Khyāl, using syllables and words with a similar abstract spirit. Gāndharva was indeed much more self-consciously abstract than Sāma, as is clear from the discourse upon it. It was already a greatly esteemed form of art-music with its own established tradition, when Bharata wrote his Nāṭyaśāstra (second-century BCE). We discover that Bharata, whose theater, nāṭya, was, in his own words, a basically representational or imitation-based art, uses this established form as a source for constructing a new word-oriented sung music to be used as an integral part of his theater, much as a composer for a Hindi film today might construct a word-dominated tune out of a rāga. But Bharata goes into the principle of the matter, making the theoretical comment that for nāṭya the music of the Gāndharva form consisting of svara, tāla and pada (tones, rhythmic structures and words; with svara as the basic component, and thus the primary and dominating element of the three named in the sequence) has to be understood and redefined in a manner that overturns the sequence, making pada the first and chief element of the three. This upside-down definition of Gāndharva,

with pada—or word—dominating svara and tāla, changes the resultant music both in form and spirit making it, in principle, more appropriate for the representational purpose of nāṭya. Abhinava uses the very succinctly significant term, svapratiṣṭha (self-contained, self-sustained) for characterizing the abstract music of Gāndharva (and also for a similarly nonrepresentational, abstract form of ancient dance, or nṛtta, the tāṇḍava), recognizing that the "language" or the symbolic systems of these forms have no vācya-vācaka-bhāva, or any representational intention. Abhinava's pregnant term "svapratiṣṭha" was also meant to contrast these forms with nāṭya (or kāvya or literature), with their clear intent of anukaraṇa—or imitation—which cannot be conceived of without a meaningful reference to an outside world.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Aesthetics of the Resplendent Sapphire: Erotic Devotion in Rūpa Gosvāmin's *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi*

NRISINHA PRASAD BHADURI

I. THE AMOROUS AND THE AESTHETIC

Love and poetry are not only both equally mysterious, the connection between them is also mysterious. Not all poetry is about love. And not all love results in poetry. Yet it is hard to shake off the feeling that there is something amorous about poetry and something poetic about love. Although Plato was notorious for his suspicion of poets, his dialogue (*The Symposium*) on the mind-bending nature of love has been studied in the West as a source for his aesthetics. Although *śṛṅgāra*, or the erotic, is only one of the nine major aesthetic *rasas* (aesthetic juices/ flavors/modes) in classical Indian aesthetics, in Rūpa Gosvāmin's philosophy of art, *śṛṅgāra* of different kinds is the source of all other art-emotions. While the *bhakti*, devotion, and love of a self-effacing gopī (cowherd-girl playmate of Kṛṣṇa), which is consummated in the selfless desire for the union of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, forms the central literary, poetic, musical, and spiritual emotion, there are three other primary forms of love that aid it: (1) love as servitude, (2) love as friendship, and (3) love as filial affection. In this chapter, I apply Rūpa Gosvāmin's complex theory of love, especially love-in-separation (*vipralambhaśṛṅgāra*), to the exquisite poetry and music of the "Song of the Gopī" (*Gopīgītā*), from the tenth canto of *Śrīmadbhāgavatapurāṇa*, where Kṛṣṇa disappears in the middle of the full moon night of the great love sport, and the forlorn gopīs weep and roam from grove to grove in search of their beloved.